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Cease-Fire Developments

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Cease-Fire Developments

25X1

CONTENTS

4 July 1973

SOUTH VIETNAM 1

Viet Cong Preparing to Deploy
Truce Teams
Canadian Delegates Still Missing
Quang Tri Gets Capital

CAMBODIA. 4

Government Troops Open One Road,
Lose Control of Another

25X1

SOUTH VIETNAMViet Cong Preparing to Deploy Truce Teams

Saigon-based Viet Cong officers were scheduled to make "liaison trips" to Communist-controlled areas in three of the seven truce regions on 3 July to arrange for the deployment of field teams. According to a South Vietnamese officer on the Two Party Joint Military Commission (JMC), the Viet Cong late last week requested transportation, beginning on 29 June, to "PRG-controlled" territory in all seven regions. The Communists tried to bypass the JMC regional headquarters, and this may have prompted the government to say that it could not meet such a tight schedule.

The Viet Cong's persistent refusal to deploy field truce teams has prevented the JMC from becoming an effective working body. In the early weeks of the cease-fire the Communists were probably short on skilled, reliable cadre who could make the transition from the jungles to the towns or handle the complex political give and take required of the JMC teams. For its part the Thieu government has done little at least until recently, to assure either security or sustenance for the Communist delegations, most of which would be isolated in government-held towns and villages.

25X1

Canadian Delegates Still Missing

25X1

Canadian officials believe the two missing Canadian members of the ICCS are being held by the Viet Cong in a plantation area east of Saigon. They failed to return on 29 June from a prearranged meeting with Viet Cong members of the PRG near the Long Khanh provincial capital of Xuan Loc.

These officials report that the two officers had met with PRG officials two months ago to try

4 July 1973

-1-

25X1

[redacted]

to establish personal liaison with local Viet Cong officials, and had agreed to a follow-up meeting. When the South Vietnamese province chief was told of the meeting, he retaliated by saturating the area with a heavy artillery barrage. Canadian officials speculate that the Viet Cong are now holding the Canadian officers to protest the government shelling, but believe the Communists will eventually release them.

The South Vietnamese have been sensitive to Canadian liaison efforts with the PRG and do not want the contacts to continue. Their version of the incident is that the Canadians were investigating an alleged cease-fire violation alone when they were "captured" by the Viet Cong. A government official speculated to a US consular officer recently that it might be a good idea for the GVN to "capture" some Polish and Hungarian representatives if the Communists do not release the Canadians.

Whatever the outcome, the incident will serve to heighten South Vietnamese suspicions of the ICCS and may create obstacles to genuine cooperation with that body. The incident has already provided ammunition for Saigon and the Viet Cong to accuse each other of violating the cease-fire agreement and preventing a true peace.

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25X1

25X1

Quang Tri Gets Capital

The Vietnamese Communists apparently have selected Dong Ha as the capital for Quang Tri Province. NCNA, broadcasting a dispatch from one of its correspondents visiting Quang Tri, refers to Dong Ha as the capital. The correspondent describes Dong Ha's "bustling downtown area" and claims there has been considerable construction in the city during the last four months, part of which is for provincial administrative offices.

4 July 1973

25X1

25X1

There have been occasional references over the last year to a Communist "revolutionary committee" in Quang Tri Province, but this is the first reference to a provincial capital. Military and civil responsibilities are in the hands of provincial offices similar to those in North Vietnam, which are linked to the North Vietnamese administrative structure.

25X1

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Although Dong Ha was widely rumored to be the most likely site of the PRG capital, a PRG official recently denied this. The Communists are especially sensitive to allegations that Quang Tri is part of North Vietnam.

25X1

25X1

25X1

4 July 1973

25X1

CAMBODIAGovernment Troops Open One Road, Lose Control of Another

Over the past 24 hours Cambodian troops have reopened one road and lost control of another. On 3 July Route 5 was secured, but rice convoys will not be able to traverse sections of the road some 35 miles north of Phnom Penh until repairs are completed. During the early morning hours of 4 July Communist forces cut Route 4 some 20 miles west of Phnom Penh. A hastily-organized relief force is moving from Kompong Speu in an effort to reopen the road. Similar attacks against this stretch of Route 4 can be expected in the days ahead.

25X1

25X1

4 July 1973